

# REPORT OF THE TRAIL SYSTEM TEAM

In July, 1996, the Trail System Action Team was established by SMMART to address ways to accommodate trail users within the existing trail system. This team was created to address issues touched on, but not resolved by, two other Action Teams, the Multiple Use Trail Guidelines Team and the Multiple Use Trail System Access Team. The Guidelines Team prepared trail guidelines for the construction of new trails, but did not develop guidelines for *existing* trails. The System Access Team was established to look at the mountain trail system and develop recommendations for trail usage by mountain bikes, however, the team was not able to work together to complete a report for SMMART. The Trail System Team was thus established to address these issues and to have more formal membership; one trail user representative for accessibility, hiking, equestrian, mountain bicycling, and trail running. In addition, three other members served as liaisons to other SMMART Action Teams, as well as represented public agencies, to round out the team.

## Purpose

The purpose of the Trail System Team is to provide guidance to land managers on how to accommodate trail users on the Santa Monica Mountains and adjacent trail systems.

## Process

The team used a process known as “Mutual Gains Negotiating”, described in the book by Roger Fisher and William Ury in **Getting to Yes**<sup>3</sup>. This process approaches negotiation based on the idea that although parties may have genuinely different positions that are in conflict, they have underlying interests in common that may provide a foundation for reaching suitable resolutions. Steps in this process include identifying interests that can provide the building blocks for resolving differences. Next, is to develop options, or possible solutions, to the problem. Testing those options against some external standard or measurement would provide all parties a sense that the agreement is legitimate and persuade others that the agreement reached between the parties was the right agreement to have reached.

The Trail System Team proceeded through some of these steps, meeting during the fall of 1996 and early winter of 1997. Below is a summary of the work developed by the team. The first section describes the areas of agreement reached, the lists of options and criteria generated by team members, and summarizes obstacles the team identified as standing in its way of reaching agreement. This portion of the report is prepared by the team’s facilitator, based on what occurred in the five team meetings that took place in the fall of 1996. The next section contains descriptions of each trail user representative’s preferred solution on how to accommodate trail users within the Santa Monica Mountains and adjacent trail systems.

**Table 3. Potential Options and User Comments**

<b>Options</b>	<b>Equestrian Comments</b>	<b>Hiker Comments</b>	<b>Mountain Bicyclist Comments</b>	<b>Trail Runner Comments</b>
1. Whole Access Trail in every park	Yes, where use is probable and construction is possible.	Yes. Wherever possible, on existing and new trails and consistent with the Americans Disabilities Act.	Yes.	Yes. Keep bikes off these trails; too dangerous.
2. Re-design ranch and utility roads for recreational use	Yes, after master plan review .	Yes. To enlarge, enhance and diversify the trail system, and increase access in park areas.	Yes, where appropriate.	
3. Improve signage	Yes, see Signage Team's report.	Yes. Signs at trail entry points and trail junctions to clearly indicate allowed trail uses, and mileage as well as advisory information.	Yes.	Yes, signs restricting bike use of trails often removed or defaced
4. Organize/re-design trailheads	Yes, communicate items of importance, minimal impact on resources and neighbors.	Yes. To provide parking and other facilities and provide staging areas for park hikes and activities.	Yes.	
5. Eliminate stairs	No, sometimes only means of placing and preserving a trail.	No. Stairs may be the only solution in areas of steep trail tread subject to heavy erosion.	Yes, where possible	
6. Build new parallel trails	No, costly, destructive, not enforceable.	No. Such a plan is environmentally destructive and economically unrealistic.	In exceptional cases (e.g., at crowded trailheads; alternative routes to nature or educational trails	

Options	Equestrian Comments	Hiker	Mountain Bicyclist Comments	Trail Runner Comments
7. Pullover zones	No, not realistic.	No, may not be possible on established trails, are not usually needed on single-track trails and require removal of more plants and vegetation.	Yes	
8. Build safe and adequate trails	Yes, not just wide; what is the trail definition of adequate?	Yes. This is always the goal.	Yes	
9. Physical obstacles to enforce trail use	No, not enforceable.	No. Obstacles are not usually effective and may make trails less accessible to physically limited users.	Yes, when necessary.	
<b>II. REGULATING TRAIL USE</b>				
1. On - off days/on-off times		No. These are all unrealistic and expensive operational nightmares.	None of II.1 through II.4. would be workable in the Santa Monica Mountains. The benefits of any of them could be achieved in other ways (e.g., through education of trail users and through having enough open trails to disperse users.). Many of these were offered as a specific restriction on bikes and not other users. This would be unfair. The same rules should apply across the board.	
2. Permit/license system	No, costly and not realistically enforceable.	No. See comment on II.1	No. See comment on II.1.	
3. Group size limits	No. not enforceable	No. See comment on II.1	No. See comment on II.1.	

Options	Equestrian Comments	Hiker Comments	Mountain Bicyclist Comments	Trail Runner Comments
4. Carrying Capacity	Yes, resources should always be considered.	Yes, but needs further study. Safety and environmental concerns should always be the bottom line.	No. See comments on II.1	
5. Guided visits to sensitive areas	No, sensitive areas should remain unknown.	Yes, subject to park staff control.	Yes, where necessary	
6. Strict enforcement of laws and rules	Yes, some users deliberately putting the Park and other users at risk.	Yes.	Yes.	
7. Better enforcement/ additional staffing	Yes	Yes.	Yes, where possible	Yes, there is, practically speaking, little enforcement now.
<b>III. ALLOCATING TRAIL USE</b>				
1. Close all trails to bikes	Yes, single track rails.	Yes, single-track trails and narrow trails.	No, this is totally unacceptable to the mountain bike community. We need more trail riding opportunities.	No, just close all single track trails and certain other roads.
2. Close all trails		No, but protect single-track from machine use.	No. See comment to III.1.	
3. Keep status quo	No, no bikes on single track trails.		No. See comment to III.1.	
4. Selective/ Multiple Use access	Yes, approved eight foot wide roads.	Yes. Most fire roads and double-track trails designated multiple access.	Yes, Most trails should be shared use. Exceptions would close trails for specific management goals.	
5. Close all trails to machines	Yes, single track trails.	Yes, narrow and single-track trails.	No	No, just close all single track trails and certain other roads.

Options	Equestrian Comments	Hiker Comments	Mountain Bicyclist Comments	Trail Runner Comments
6. Create use zones	No, the park must be viewed holistically.	No.	Yes. Most trails should be shared use. Exceptions would close trails for specific management goals.	
7. Open all trails to bicycles		No. Hikers and equestrians need separation from bikes.	No	
8. Determine use by width of trail	No, by width, slope, surface material, location, access, etc.	No. Width is one criteria but steepness, sight lines, sharp turns, location and user conflicts are criteria, too.	No, width is one criterion. but not the most important. Bikes are 2" at the tire, 16" at the pedals and 24" at the handlebar. We don't take up much more room than hikers. Mounted cyclists are narrower, lighter. shorter and more maneuverable than mounted equestrians. Width is not the issue.	
9. Mountain Bicycles can use Backbone Trail	No, backcountry experience should not be compromised.	No. Bikes should not be permitted on single-track trails, and some portions of fire roads might need to be closed to bikes. This unique trail must not be compromised.	Absolutely. The major trails should be shared use.	No, bike usage displaces other users
10. Regional trails get special consideration to become multiple use trails	No, trails opened to bikes displace other user groups.	No. Multi-use displaces traditional users.	Absolutely. The major trails should be shared use.	
11. No bicycles on single track trails	Yes, safe. enforceable, communicable, resource protective.	Yes.	No.	Yes, safe. enforceable, communicable. resource protective.
12. Open trails so all can reach core of park	No, park has no core.	No. There is no core in the SMMNRA.	Yes.	
13. No sports recreation allowed		None that threatens or drives off traditional users.		

Options	Equestrian Comments	Hiker Comments	Mountain Bicyclist Comments	Trail Runner Comments
<b>IV. MITIGATING/REDUCING CONFLICT</b>				
1. Provide information on how to use trails and on other user groups	Yes.	Yes. But trail etiquette was never an issue until bikes began riding the trails.	Yes	
2. Community building	Yes.	Yes, whenever possible.	Yes	
3. Horse/hiker/runner desensitization	No, the gut level feeling of fear that non mechanized user groups have can not be desensitized.	No. Trail users on foot or horseback cannot be desensitized to their fear of mountain bikes and speeding bikers.	Yes, if this means providing specific voluntary training opportunities.	No, absurd idea.
4. Educate users regarding yield	Yes, currently opposite of reality.	Yes, but change the signs to reflect reality.	Yes, but redundant with III.1.	
5. Change yield policy/yield signs	Yes, currently opposite of reality.	Yes, to reflect reality. People almost always yield to mountain bikes	No, most people understand and find the signs helpful. The signs are used nationally by many agencies. We may be able to design a better sign, but it's not a priority	Enforce common usage of word "yield".

**Table 4. Potential Criteria**

SUGGESTED CRITERIA	SUGGESTED MEASUREMENTS	KEY CRITERIA (# of dots)
1. Minimize new disturbances to natural and cultural areas?	Impact on cultural/archeological sites; Erosion; Water quality; Impact on vegetation; Displacement of wildlife	6
2. Provides safe experience for users?	Minimize hazards; Design for safety; Signage for hazards; Separate incompatible users; Education re safety and risks; Enforcement; Monitoring; Perception of safety; People's reports/opinions expressed; Accident reports; Citations; Physical evidence (skid marks, marks offtrail)	6
3. Compatible with park guidelines? (This means both that the option could be consistent across agencies as well as the option could be a recommendation for changes to park guidelines.)	Review park guidelines; General plans; Park enabling; legislation; Park rules and regulations	6
4. Provide enjoyable, quality experience for all trail users?	Survey; Letters/opinions expressed; Use trends over time	5
5. Realistic in terms of the existing trail system?	Can it be implemented immediately (within 5 years?) with the existing trail system?	4
6. Perception of safety?	Education re nature — option?; Education re other users — option?; Survey; Signage; Letters/opinions expressed: Use trends over time	4
7. Fair/proportional/equitable allocation?	Mileage available to different users; Demographics	4
8. Based on (qualitative and quantitative) (subjective and objective data)?	Surveys of users; Accident reports; Letters/ opinions expressed Appropriate recreation	4
9. Meets needs and interests of diverse groups	Surveys/public input	3
10. Self-regulating?/Self-policing?	Minimal need for external enforcement	3
11. Maximize interpretation opportunities?	Interesting/educational; Look for opportunities	2
12. Meet Americans with Disability Act requirements?	Review ADA language	2

SUGGESTED CRITERIA	SUGGESTED MEASUREMENTS	KEY CRITERIA (# of dots)
13. Meet trail guidelines for new trails?	Specifications in the MUGS trail guidelines	1
14. Legal?	Review law and legislation	1
15. Can volunteers assist in implementation?		1
16. Enforceable?	Staff/volunteers available for enforcement; Signage; Technology available	1
17. Standards for monitoring	Assess/evaluate what's implemented	1
18. Meet trail guidelines for existing trails?	(Note: would need guidelines for existing trails)	
19. Affordable? Minimize costs?		
20. Long term cost efficiency?		
21. Compatible across agencies?	Compare park guidelines for consistency	
22. Anticipates future needs?	Population/growth; New users	
23. Timeliness of implementation?	Can it be done in 5 years?	
24. Could funding be available for implementation?		
25. Environmental reviews		Added from options list
26. User feedback/census		
27. Native American input		
28. Establish minimum standards for monitoring in advance of opening a trail		



## Agreements Reached by the Trail System Team Members

After going through the process of identifying criteria and options, there were limited areas of agreements reached. These included:

- Support for providing whole access (or accessible) trails in every park, wherever possible and consistent with the Americans with Disabilities Act.
- Support for improving signage to indicate allowed trail uses and to provide greater information about how to use trails.
- General support for building safe and adequate trails within the mountains, but no agreement as to the specifics of what would constitute safe or adequate trails.
- Rejection of the idea of designating on-off days or times as a way of regulating trail usage.
- Support for better enforcement, including additional staffing, to monitor trail usage.
- Rejection of the idea that all trails be open to mountain bicycles.
- Consideration, but rejection of the following options:
  - Closing all trails period
  - Opening trails so all users could reach core areas of parks
  - Prohibiting sports recreation
  - Allowing anything goes

There also seemed to be a general consensus of the team that these measurements in and of themselves did not address fundamental concerns of trail users and thus did not really resolve the conflict between users.

## Obstacles for Reaching Further Agreements

The team identified a number of obstacles as standing in the way of reaching further agreement and of working together productively to continue towards an agreement:

- Some team members felt there were histories of personal conflicts with each other that got in the way of working together productively.
- Some team members have deeply held sentiments on both sides of the issue of mountain bicycles on trails and find it difficult to reach compromises and may not see that the issue could be resolved among themselves.
- Some team members were not certain that land management agencies would adopt and be able to implement what the team might recommend.
- Some team members were not certain that their recommendations would be able to change the behavior of a large number of users and/or be accepted by users.
- Some team members were concerned this process was “reinventing the wheel” when a legal deci-

sion existed they felt provided direction on how to resolve the issue and that insufficient time was spent discussing the implications of this legal decision.

- Some team members did not trust the process being used. felt they did not have enough information from which to make a decision and wished to have input from experts from various fields, and felt that other interests should be involved on the team to adequately address the issue.
- Some team members felt that the process was onerous for volunteers.
- Some team members wondered if it was possible that they collectively could not come up with the best solution for trail users and that land managers should make decisions instead.

The team discussed possible consequences that might result if an agreement was not reached. One consequence suggested was that there would be continuing inconsistencies across agencies in how they accommodate different trail users, creating confusion and potential frustration among users. Another consequence was the possibility that users would have to participate in another planning process to determine trail usage (“having to do it all over again”). Another comment was that the “status quo” may be sufficient for meeting the legal mandate of the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area’s mandate to provide hiking, equestrian, and bicycling trails, as well as perhaps be more acceptable to users that a change any other way. Together, there was a sense that the consequences of not coming up with an agreement were not that great, and given the number of obstacles standing in the way of an agreement, there might be not sufficient motivation to continue the hard work of reaching an agreement.

On this basis, and after determining the limited areas of agreement that could be reached on the list of options generated, the team decided not to proceed further with developing agreed upon guidance to land managers. Instead, the next section of this report contains perspectives of each trail user representative on the team on the issue of accommodating users within the Santa Monica Mountains and adjacent trail systems.

## User Statements

This following attachment contains statements from the following trail users representatives on the Trail System Team: Accessibility, Equestrian, Hiking, Mountain Bicycling and Trail Running. These reports were supposed to describe each user representative’s perspective on the issue of accommodating users within the trail system. they were to include a list of options selected or rejected and a discussion as to why. they were to comment on what they considered to be appropriate criteria to be used by public agencies in determining trail usage. The reports were to focus positively on solutions they preferred.

## Implementation Recommendations

No implementation recommendations are provided by the team.

### Team Members

*Mike Taylor*, Accessibility; *Mary Ann Webster*, Hiking; *Ralph Wuycott*, Equestrian; *Jim Hasenauer*, Mountain Bicycling; *Bridget Walsh*, Trail Running; *Tedra Fox*, Trails Inventory Team, National Park Service; *Neil Braunstein*, Missing Links Team, California Department of Parks and Recreation; *Jim Gilmore*, Multiple Use Trail Guidelines Team, Conejo Open Space Conservation Agency; *Holly Van Houten*, facilitator, National Park Service’s Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program; *Woody Smeck*, alternate, National Park Service; *Chaennon Lyons*, alternate, trail running.

## Attachment E. User Statements

### Accessibility

Prepared by Mike Taylor

What I would like to see for the Disabled, is what is available in Thousand Oaks. The Conejo Open Space and Conservation Agency worked very hard on the Oak Creek Trail. There is a handicapped rest room, drinking fountains and picnic tables. What we have there, I would like to see for the areas in question.

If the same was done for any of the other trails, it would make it extremely pleasant for the disabled to be able to spend a day in the woods, with nature. This is the only way we can get on a trail, see the beauty of the natural growth. This is only place for the blind to read trail signs in Braille and know by feel and touch about nature. I have seen a lot of group homes for disabled use the trail in Thousand Oaks. I feel that if you build it, they will come.

Options? They really don't apply to the handicapped persons, who are grateful for anything they can get. What is going on between the hikers and bikers is very distasteful. They seem to have lost the real meaning of what's going on.

In my situation, and I speak for wheelchair users, and the handicapped, or disabled persons, when you can't just go into the woods or off the pavement, you do appreciate the trails we do have and can use. Also, it doesn't matter who else uses the trails, we can all get along. When I use the trail in Thousand Oaks, I do yield for almost everyone. But I can sit in one spot and just enjoy the beauty. As long as there is a handicapped parking space, bathroom, and even a bluff to look out from, I would be happy

The ultimate would be to have overnight camping for the disabled, What ever you do build, the people will use it with a lot of appreciation.

### Equestrian

Prepared by Ralph Waycott

Since bicycles first appeared in the Santa Monica Mountains, equestrians have had serious concerns. The dangerous and negative impact bicyclists have had on park resources and other user groups has been established conclusively not only here but also in other parks. Unfortunately, I don't know how to present the equestrian user group's preferred solution for multi-use without referencing facts that some may perceive as negative about bicyclists. I, too, ride a mountain bike in the park. What is the horse/bike relationship in the park?

The horse's value in the Santa Monica Mountains is significantly different than it was two centuries ago when it was introduced by the Spanish expeditionary teams from Mexico. At that time horses were used for the Spanish exploration of this area. Now people ride horses for the enjoyment of the human/horse relationship which is enhanced by the rider being amidst nature and going distances not feasible without a horse. Horses supply a unique bridge to the world of nature for their rider. As with other members of the animal world, horses have a heightened awareness of their surroundings and provide a close-up study of nature's cycles, interdependencies, and communication. With horses acting as intermediaries between humans and nature, they communicate a message from wildlife, "Bicycles are not nature friendly." No other animal can offer the added dimensions that a horse does for a park visitor. Clearly, the horse/rider interaction is arguably one of the most perfect park experiences from both agency and user perspectives.

It is true that both mountain bike and equestrian user groups are "riders". However, bikers only see superficial similarities when they suggest their trail privileges should be the same as equestrians. Bicycles are defined in the National Park Service's Code of Federal Regulations as "vehicles". Webster's dictionary defines a bicycle as "a vehicle". Webster's defines a vehicle as "a conveyance moving on wheels, runners, or the like, as an automobile." Unmistakably, a bike is a vehicle. In fact, vehicles were part of the reason why the park land was designated. It was determined that a safety zone was needed for people wanting to safely enjoy nature without civilization's influences.

The equestrian user group's preferred solution is simple: The only place bikes belong is on appropriate fire and utility roads that are at least eight (8) feet wide. Appropriate roads are dependent on resource sensitivity,

carrying capacity, slope, location, surface material, impact on other user groups, and adequate means of access. Bikes must be required to travel at less than the present maximum speed of 15 miles per hour. Rather than putting other user groups in harm's way, bicyclists are free to use public vehicular roads to augment park deficiencies. The net results of this solution are:

- Benefits to resource protection
- Safer environment for other users
- Meets park management guidelines
- Needs no additional staffing
- Works within fiscal constraints
- Simplifies communication of trail access privileges
- Facilitates enforcement of trail use
- Avoids some agency litigation.

I do not realistically expect that all inter-user group conflicts will magically disappear with the implementation of this solution. A SMMNRA consulting Conflict Resolution Team could meet on an "as needed" basis. The Team would consist of more than one representative from each user group as well as agency representatives. Representatives would be appointed by the agencies in order to avoid repeating the contentious failed attempts of this SMMART Trail System Team and its predecessor, the Multi-use Trail System Access Team.

In closing, bicyclists are not the first user group, machine or otherwise, that have wanted to pursue their interests in the mountains, nor will they be the last. Thanks to public and private interests we can recreate with our machines and vehicles in a wide area of Southern California's diverse shoreline, mountain and desert venues. With horses as nature's gauge, equestrians are in a unique position to experience the fear and distress that afflicts wildlife when bikes are present. Please, maintain this Park as one of the few sanctuaries left for those who do not choose to recreate with nature while being subject to the dangers of these machines; perpetuate this natural refuge amid the urban sprawl so nature can speak to us.

## Options Reviewed

### PHYSICAL IMPROVEMENTS

*Whole Access Trail In Every Park.* Yes, where use is probable and construction is possible.

*Re-Design Ranch And Utility Roads.* Yes, after master plan review.

*Improve Signage.* Yes, see Signage Team's report.

*Organize/Re-Design Trail Heads.* Yes, communicate items of importance, minimal impact on resources and

neighbors.

*Eliminate Stairs.* No, sometimes only means of placing and preserving a trail.

*Build Parallel Trails.* No, costly, destructive, not enforceable.

*Pullover Zones.* No, not realistic.

*Build Safe And Adequate Trails.* Yes, not just wide; what is the trail definition of adequate?

*Physical Obstacles To Enforce Trail Use.* No, not enforceable.

### REGULATING TRAIL USE

*Permit/License System.* No, costly and not realistically enforceable.

*Group Size Limits.* No, not enforceable.

*Carrying Capacity.* Yes, resources should always be considered.

*Guided Visits To Sensitive Areas.* No, sensitive areas should remain unknown.

*Better Enforcement/Staffing.* Yes .

*No Bikes On Single Track Trails.* Yes, safe, enforceable, communicable, resource protective.

*Strict Enforcement Of/Laws/Rules.* Yes, some users deliberately putting the Park and other users at risk

### ALLOCATING TRAIL USE

*Close All Trails To Bikes/Machines.* Yes, single track trails.

*Keep Status Quo.* No, no bikes on single track trails.

*Selective Multiple Use Access.* Yes, approved eight foot wide roads.

*Create Use Zones.* No, the Park must be viewed holistically.

*Determine Use By Width Of Trail.* No, by width, slope, surface material, location, access, etc.

*Open Trails So All Can Reach Core Of Park.* No, Park has no core.

*Bikes Get Backbone Trail.* No, backcountry experience should not be compromised.

*Regional Trails As Multiple Use Trails.* No, trails opened to bikes displace other user groups.

### MITIGATING/REDUCING CONFLICT

*Information On Trail Use And User Groups.* Yes.

*Community Building.* Yes.

*Horse/Hiker/Biker Desensitization.* No, the gut level feeling of fear that non mechanized user groups have can not be desensitized.

*Educate Re Yield.* Yes, currently opposite of reality.

*Change/Remove Yield Signs.* Yes, currently opposite of reality.

## Attachment E (cont.)

### Suggested Criteria<sup>5</sup>

These follow no particular order:

*Minimize disturbances*

*Safe experience*

*Compatible with Park guidelines*

*Enjoyable, quality, experience*

*Realistic within existing trails*

*Perception of safety*

*Based on objective (quantitative) and subjective (qualitative) data*

*Self regulating/policing*

*Maximize interpretation opportunities*

*Meets Americans with Disabilities Act*

*Enforceable*

*Anticipate future needs*

*Environmental reviews*

*User feedback.*

### Hiking

Prepared by Mary Ann Webster

The huge population of the Los Angeles region enhances the value of the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area (SMMNRA). And, as in all densely populated major urban areas, controversies over trail access and trail use are causing persistent conflicts. Park agencies are being pressured to open single-track trails to the aggressive sport of mountain biking. Such a plan degrades the environment and denies a safe and quality park experience to a large constituency. The goal for all agencies controlling public park land in the SMMNRA should be the creation of a master plan that protects the environment, protects the public safety and fosters the enjoyment of all park users.

In keeping with these goals, the preferred solution of hikers is:

1. Single-track trails in the SMMNRA should be closed to bikes since mountain biking is a potentially dangerous sport and incompatible with all traditional trail uses.
2. The Backbone Trail, especially the narrow and single-track portions, should be closed to mountain bike use.
3. Most fire roads, double-track trails and paved roads should be designated as multi-use and open to bike use. However, portions of fire roads might be closed in areas where user conflicts and accidents have become intolerable, such as in Sycamore Canyon at Point Mugu State Park.
4. The majority of single-track trails, including the Backbone Trail, should be open to equestrians (a small percentage of trail users) who have a historical presence in these mountains and whose presence does not create problems or user conflicts.
5. A single-track trail may, in a rare instance, be considered for multi-use. This exception may occur when a single-track trail is needed to connect major bike road corridors. However, such an exception would need to satisfy all environmental, safety and user conflict criteria. Public input and public hearings must be conducted and results evaluated before multi-use access is granted.
6. Single-track trails, wherever possible, should accommodate usage by the physically challenged. The



goal is to provide all people with disabilities a variety of enriching trail experiences in parks within the SMMNRA.

The mission of providing recreation opportunities to the general public, including mountain bikers, is already being met by those governing park land. More than half the mileage of public trails in the SMMNRA is currently accessible to mountain bike use. Numerous trails include fire roads, paved roads and double-track trails which criss-cross the mountains of the SMMNRA, providing diverse opportunities for the sport of mountain biking.

This preferred solution recognizes that everyone has the right to use the parks and trails in the SMMNRA. No person is excluded. Mountain bikes, which are machines, have no right to trails. Experience has shown that they drive away traditional users, they create user conflicts, and they prevent others from a safe and enjoyable trail use experience. Most important, the increasing frequency of bicycle use, the vast numbers, and the excessive speeds, carry the potential for serious environmental damage and resource degradation.

Decisions on trail access must include three major elements: protection of park resources, preservation of the traditional outdoor park experience, and protection of the safety of all park users.

1. **Protection of park resources:** Hiking/walking is the least disruptive activity on trails. Mountain bikers travel at speeds more than five times faster than hikers. Such fast speeds impact and disrupt the environment. On steep slopes and sharp turns, bikes brake and skid, creating ruts and pushing surface gravels into ditches and onto water bars. On narrow trails, bikers ride (or force others) onto surrounding areas and fragile plant life. Widening trails to accommodate bike use would require major increases in cut and fill of soil and increased removal of vegetation and plant life. Trail maintenance on wider trails is more difficult, more expensive and more disruptive. Most single track trails will not stand up to heavy, sustained mountain bike use.

2. **Preservation of the traditional outdoor park experience:** People on foot, including walkers, hikers, runners, children, older citizens, bird watchers and nature lovers have a right to use and enjoy the trails. When single-track trails have opened to multi-use (such as Rogers Ridge Trail in Pacific Palisades & Wood Canyon Vista Trail in Pt. Mugu) hikers, walkers and other traditional users were driven off these trails. There were conflicts. There were near accidents. There were accidents. Significant numbers of hikers, equestrians and other traditional users have abandoned these trails. Both of these trails are part of the

Backbone Trail. These trails, as well as other single-track trails, need to be closed to bikes so people can enjoy the spiritual and physical aspects of park lands, in peace.

3. **Personal safety of all trail users:** Bikes threaten the safety of hikers and equestrians. If single-track trails are designated multi-use, heavy concentration of bike use will increase bike-related accidents. Narrow trails limit visibility around curves, while wider trails encourage high bike speeds. Poor lines of sight, narrowness and steep slopes create hazardous situations. These factors create potential for accidents and conflicts between bikers and traditional users, who are constantly alert for the bikes which often startle and frighten them. Those on foot almost always yield because they are afraid and their perception of safety is undermined.

## Options Reviewed

### PHYSICAL IMPROVEMENTS

**Whole access trail in every park.** Yes. Wherever possible, on existing and new trails and consistent with the Americans with Disabilities Act.

**Redesign Ranch and Utility Roads.** Yes. To enlarge, enhance and diversify the trail system, and increase access in park areas.

**Improve signage.** Yes. Signs at trail entry points and trail junctions to clearly indicate allowed trail uses, and mileage as well as advisory information.

**Organize/Redesign Trailheads.** Yes. To provide parking and other facilities and provide staging areas for park hikes and activities.

**Eliminate stairs.** No. Stairs may be the only solution in areas of steep trail tread subject to heavy erosion.

**Parallel Trails (i.e., build new trails).** No. Such a plan is environmentally destructive and economically unrealistic.

**Pullover Zones.** No, may not be possible on established trails, are not usually needed on single-track trails and require removal of more plants and vegetation.

**Build safe and adequate trails.** Yes. This is always the goal.

**Create physical obstacles on trails.** No. Obstacles are not usually effective and may make trails less accessible to physically limited users.

### REGULATING TRAIL USE

**On-of weekend days, On-of weekend times, Permit/License system, Group size limits.** No. These are all unrealistic and expensive operational nightmares.

**Carrying Capacity.** yes, but needs further study. Safety and environmental concerns should always be the bottom line.

## Attachment E (cont.)

*Guided visits to sensitive areas.* Yes, subject to park staff control.

*Better enforcement/staffing.* Yes.

*Strict enforcement of laws/rules.* Yes.

### ALLOCATING TRAIL USE

*Close all trails to mountain bikes.* Yes, single-track trails and narrow trails.

*Close all trails period.* No, but protect single-track from machine use.

*Keep status quo.* No. Bikes should not be permitted on single-track trails, and some portions of fire roads might need to be closed to bikes.

*Selective multiple use access.* Yes. Most fire roads and double-track trails designated multiple access.

*Open all trails.* No. Hikers and equestrians need separation from bikes.

*Close all trails to machines.* Yes, narrow and single-track trails.

*Create use zones.* No.

*Determine use by width of trail.* No. Width is one criteria but steepness, sight lines, sharp turns, location and user conflicts are criteria, too.

*Open trails so all can reach core of park.* No. There is no core in the SMMNRA.

*No sports recreation allowed.* None that threatens or drives off traditional users.

*Bikes get Backbone Trail.* No. This unique trail must not be compromised.

*Anything goes.* No.

*Regional trails as multi-use trails.* No. Multi-use displaces traditional users.

*No bikes on single-track trails.* Yes

*Provides safe experiences for users and offers a perception of safety.*

*Compatible with park guidelines.*

*Based on surveys of users, accident reports, letters/opinions expressed.*

*Self-regulating, self-policing.*

*Realistic in terms of the existing trail system.*

*Meets Americans with Disability Act requirements.*

*Legal and enforceable.*

*Anticipates future needs.*

### MITIGATING/REDUCING CONFLICT

*Provide and reinforce information on how to use trails and open space.* Yes. But trail etiquette was never an issue until bikes began riding the trails.

*Community Building.* Yes, whenever possible.

*Horse/Hiker/Biker desensitization.* No. Trail users on foot or horseback cannot be desensitized to their fear of mountain bikes and speeding bikers.

*Educate all users about "Yield".* Yes, but change the signs to reflect reality.

*Change/remove "yield" signs.* Yes, to reflect reality. People almost always yield to mountain bikes.

## Suggested Criteria<sup>6</sup>

*Minimizes disturbances to natural and cultural areas: protects the environment.*

*Provides enjoyable, quality experiences for all trail users.*

## Mountain Bicycling

Prepared by Jim Hasenauer

The trails of the Santa Monica Mountains are a precious community resource. They provide opportunities for nature observation and study, health and fitness, urban escape and a variety of other purposes. As a community we should strive to keep the trails open and in good condition for everyone.

Our vision of the trail system features mostly shared use trails rather than restricting access to major trail user groups. Shared use trails provide the most recreational opportunities for the most users, disperse trail users most effectively, minimize disturbance from new or redundant trail construction, minimize signage, monitoring and enforcement and foster a sense of community around this important shared resource.

Our Bikes Belong/Share The Trails vision for the Santa Monica Mountains Trail System has the following elements:

1. Most trails in the Santa Monicas should be open to the shared use of bicyclists, pedestrians and equestrians.
2. Some trails should be closed to bicycles and some trails should be closed to horses to achieve certain management goals. Five management goals that might lead us to close trails are:
  - Nature interpretation, educational trails where users may stop frequently.
  - Trails for users with special needs (e.g., the disabled, children, the elderly). We support having a whole access trail in every major park.
  - Separating use at crowded trailheads (e.g., the trail system near stables may benefit from having parallel feeder trails to the main system.)
  - Providing a “no bikes” alternative in major parks (In deference to the small number of folks who are unwilling to share trails, we can live with designating one major backcountry trail “no bikes” in every major park.)
  - Designated Wilderness or Nature Preserves where bikes are prohibited and pedestrian and equestrian visits should be minimized.
3. Temporary closures of trails because of fire danger, mud or resource protection should be equally applied to all users.
4. There should be several major long distance

trails accessed by various feeder trails from many different neighborhoods and adjacent parks.

5. There should be good off road trail connections for all users to major regional and national trail systems.
6. There should be maps, educational and interpretive signing at major trail heads and directional signing at trail junctions.
7. Monitoring of trail conditions, socialization of trail users and safety needs of trail users should be met through a variety of educational events, peer group programs, volunteer efforts and professional outreach.
8. Trail planning, alignment, construction and monitoring should invite participation from all involved parties.

Achieving the Bikes Belong/Share The Trails vision would require:

1. **New trail construction.** New trails should generally be built to accommodate shared use. Good trail construction techniques pre-empt or mitigate potential problems. The SMMART Multiple Use Guidelines Committee drafted standards for new multiple use trails. While these are sometimes overly cautious, they do provide ideals which can be strived for in new trail construction.
2. **Old trails.** To be shared use trails, old trails should be assessed and rehabilitated as necessary. Some old trails should probably be abandoned completely and revegetated. Assessment and improvement of old trails for multiple use should begin with those trails that provide important missing trail linkages for cyclists. The most important criteria to be considered is to make sure there are safe areas for trail users to pass. Width of trail is generally not an issue as bikes are 2” at the tire, 16” at the pedals and 24” at the handlebars. It is not possible or desirable to completely rebuild old trails to new standards to accommodate multiple use. Improvements such as pull out areas, stair removal, minimizing blind comers and appropriate signing might be employed.
3. **Old roads.** It may be possible to convert some existing fire, utility and ranch roads to trails. The existing road system should be assessed and roads should be converted to trails where appropriate.
4. **Educational programs.** Educational efforts can go along way to protecting park resources, enhancing user enjoyment and building a trail community. Programs such as volunteer patrols, youth programs,



## Attachment E (cont.)

outreach to retailers, educational events and materials, etc. should be employed.

### Options Reviewed

This section examines the Bikes Belong/Share The Trails vision in terms of the Options generated by the SMMART Trail System Team

#### PHYSICAL IMPROVEMENTS

*Whole access trail in every park.* Yes  
*Re-design ranch and utility roads for recreational use.* Yes, where appropriate  
*Improve signage.* Yes  
*Organize/re-design trailhead.* Yes  
*Eliminate stairs.* Yes, where possible  
*Build parallel trails.* In exceptional cases (e.g., at crowded trailheads; alternative routes to nature or educational trails.  
*Pullover zones.* Yes  
*Build safe and adequate trails.* Yes  
*Create physical obstacles to enforce allowable trail use.* Yes, where necessary

#### REGULATING TRAIL USE

*On-off weekend days, On-off times, Permit/License system, Group size limits, and Carrying capacity.* None of the above would be workable in the Santa Monica Mountains. The benefits of any of them could be achieved in other ways (e.g., through education of trail users and through having enough open trails to disperse users.). Many of these were offered as a specific restriction on bikes and not other users. This would be unfair. The same rules should apply across the board.  
*Guided visits to sensitive areas.* Yes, where necessary  
*Better enforcement/additional staffing.* Yes, where possible  
*Strict enforcement of laws/rules.* Yes

#### ALLOCATING TRAIL USE

*Close all trails to bikes, Close all trails period, Keep status quo.* No, these are totally unacceptable to the mountain bike community. We need more trail riding opportunities.  
*Selective/Multiple Use Access.* Yes, Most trails should be shared use. Exceptions would close trails for specific management goals.  
*Open all trails to bikes.* No  
*Close all trails to machines.* No  
*Create use zones.* Yes, same as Selective/Multiple Use Access  
*Determine use by width.* No, width is one criterion, but

not the most important. Bikes are 2 “at the tire, 16” at the pedals and 24” at the handlebar. We don’t take up much more room than hikers. Mounted cyclists are narrower, lighter, shorter and more maneuverable than mounted equestrians. Width is not the issue.

*Open trails so each user group can reach core area of park.* Yes

*No sports recreation allowed.* No

*Bikes get the Backbone Trail.* Absolutely. The major trails should be shared use.

*Anything goes.* No

*Give special consideration to regional trails as multiple use trails (i.e., Coastal Slope, Simi to the Sea).* Absolutely. The major trails should be shared use.

*No bikes on single track trails.* No

#### MITIGATING/REDUCING CONFLICT

*Provide and reinforce information for users on other user groups and how to use trails and open space.* Yes  
*Community building.* Yes  
*Horse/hiker/runner desensitization.* Yes, if this means providing specific voluntary training opportunities.  
*Educate all users about “Yield”.* Yes, but redundant with *Provide and Reinforce information option.*  
*Change/remove “yield” signs.* No, most people understand and find the signs helpful. The signs are used nationally by many agencies. We may be able to design a better sign, but it’s not a priority

### Criteria reviewed <sup>7</sup>

This section examines the Bikes Belong/Share The Trails vision in terms of the criteria generated by the SMMART Trail System Team:

*Minimize new disturbance to natural and cultural areas.* Meets. New trail construction is minimized by sharing the existing trail resources. No trails should be built and existing trails should be removed if they threaten environmentally sensitive, historic, culturally sacred or archeological sites. These areas may be candidates for guided, supervised visits only.

*Provides safe experience for users.* Meets. Park data shows that after 15 years of mountain bike use of SMMNRA, there have been relatively few and mostly minor accidents. Interestingly, most of the accidents have been on fire roads not trails.<sup>8</sup>

*Compatible with park guidelines.* Meets

*Provide enjoyable, quality experience for all trail users* Addresses, but there are issues. To what extent is a person’s enjoyment a subjective psychological state

as opposed to something that is provided? What are the obligations of land managers? What are the obligations of the various users? Should the enjoyment of one group of users take precedence over the enjoyment of another group of users? The Bikes Belongshare The Trails vision provides a quality trail system through construction, maintenance and education. It fosters cooperation and community. The actual enjoyment of trail users though is their own responsibility.

*Realistic in terms of the existing trail system.* Meets.

*Perception of safety.* Addresses, but there are issues. Since perception is subjective, users may feel safe when they're not or not safe when they are. All backcountry recreation demands assumption of risk and personal responsibility. The Bikes Belong/Share the Trails vision establishes a safe trail system through construction, maintenance and education. There are risk management procedures built in.

*Fair/proportional/equitable trail allocation.* Meets. The Bikes Belong/Share the Trails vision gives most users the most trail opportunities.

*Based on (qualitative and quantitative)(subjective and) objective data.* Addresses, but there are issues. This is related to the "enjoyable, quality experience issue". Objective data from local and national research shows that mountain bikers are a large user group; mountain cycling is safe for participants and other trail users<sup>10</sup>; and mountain bike environmental impacts are not significantly different than hikers." Subjective reports we've heard in our meetings claim that there are too many or too few mountain bikers; that they are dangerous to themselves and others; they create an inappropriate perception of risk for other users (the startle factor); and they are destroying trails, plants and animal tranquillity. What are the obligations of agencies and of trail users here to seek out factual information? We think objective data is more useful in land use planning than the subjective experiences of a few.

*Meets needs and interests of diverse groups.* Meets. The Bikes Belongshare The Trails vision gives the most trail opportunities to the most users while still providing some restricted areas for special management goals. Most users will have full access, but every user has a place to go where they'll feel comfortable.

*Self regulating. self policing.* Meets. The Bikes Belongshare The Trail vision provides the most opportunities for user buy in, peer socialization and volunteer monitoring and enforcement.

*Maximize interpretation opportunities.* Meets

*Meets ADA requirements.* Can meet. ADA will require better signing so that users know what to expect.

*Meets guidelines for new trails.* Addresses. New trails will meet guidelines. Old trails will probably not meet all the guidelines, but the trails will be improved to better accommodate shared use.

*Legal.* Meets

*Can volunteers assist in implementation.* Meets.

*Enforceable.* Meets

*Minimum standards for monitoring.* Meets

*Meets guidelines for existing trails.* Meets

*Affordable? Minimizes Cost.* Meets. Shared trails reduce costs associated with construction, signing, monitoring, maintenance and enforcement.

*Long term cost efficiency.* Meets

*Compatible across agencies.* Meets

*Anticipates future needs.* Meets

*Timeliness of implementation.* Meets

*Funding available.* Meets

*Environmental reviews.* Meets

*User feedback/census.* Meets

*Native American input of all plans.* Addresses. Native Americans and others must be involved in planning of trail system, especially with regard to protecting sacred and historical sites. Final approval belongs to land manager.

## Attachment E (cont.)

### Trail Running

*Prepared by Bridget Walsh*

The goal of SMMART is to bring representatives of government agencies, organizations and park users together to consider issues that affect the Santa Monica Mountains. One park management issue has been raised at almost every meeting: Should park users be allowed to bring their recreation machinery, in this case mountain bicycles, with them on all park trails?

The mountain bicycle interests (A \$6.75 billion business in 1992<sup>12</sup>) want park users to be able to bring these recreation machines on almost all park trails including roads, fire roads, multiple use trails, and single track trails<sup>13</sup>. SMMART representatives of hikers, trail runners and horseback riders believe that people should only bring recreation machinery, including mountain bicycles, on trails where other vehicles are now allowed to go, but no on single track trails.

The National Park Service's (NPS) policy about managing off-road recreation machine use (aircraft use, off road bicycling, hang gliding, hunting, off road vehicle use and snowmobiling) is clear: the activity must be consistent with the park's enabling legislation and occur in such a way that it does not endanger park resources or promote conflict with other park users such as hikers, trail runners and equestrians". By law, NPS must now go through an elaborate process of scientific research, public hearings, and regulatory procedures before NPS trails, other than those trails already authorized by use of other vehicles, can be opened for mountain bicycle use.<sup>15</sup> Single track trails in NPS parks are closed to bicycles unless this process has been followed.<sup>16</sup>

Hikers, runners and equestrians spend a lot of time on the trails in the Santa Monica Mountains. We see how the soil, plants and animals are doing from day to day, month to month and year to year. They travel slowly and get a chance to talk with other park visitors as they go. Trail runners have found that bicycle use on park trails causes soil erosion, damage to vegetation, user conflict and unsafe conditions for park visitors. We discussed this at SMMART meetings. Then we set out to find solutions. Our first step was to find out if the problems with mountain bicycles on trails existed in other locations and, if so, how the problems had been solved.

We quickly learned that problems in Santa Monica Mountains were not unique but were happening in much the same way around the world: mountain bicycle use causes soil erosion, damage to vegetation, user conflict

and unsafe conditions for park visitors.<sup>17</sup> People in northern California formed the Bay Area Trails Preservation Council (BATPC) to deal with problems of mountain bicycles on trails in the Golden Gate National Recreation Area (GGNRA), a park like SMMNRA.

BATPC assisted the NPS in a lawsuit that Bicycle Trails Council of Marin brought against the Department of the Interior and NPS. Bicycle interests challenged NPS regulatory processes governing the use of bicycle within NPS parks, specifically GGNRA. Bicycle interests lost their case on every point."

U.S. District Court Judge for the Northern District of California, Eugene E. Lynch, Judge, granted summary judgement in favor of the defendants, the NPS. On May 6, 1996, the justices of the United States Court of Appeals, Ninth District said: "We affirm the district court's grant of summary judgement in favor of defendants ..." The Ninth District Court found Judge Lynch's order "thorough and well-reasoned." The mountain bike interests lost again on every point.<sup>19</sup>

The 23-page decision contained: (1) a history of the directions Congress had given NPS about managing the national parks; and (2) discussions and findings about the affects of bicycle use on park resources and on park user enjoyment and safety.

In 1916, Congress created the NPS "...to conserve the scenery and the natural and historic objects and the wild life therein and to provide for the enjoyment of the same in such manner and such means as will leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations."<sup>20</sup>

Some people mistakenly believe that because the GGNRA, like the SMMNRA, contains the words, "Recreation Area" in its name, that the primary purpose of these parks is for recreation. Not true. The primary purpose of the National Park Service is to protect resources for future generations in all NPS parks. Some background information clears up the misunderstanding.

In 1964, NPS, on its own, decided to manage parks by three NPS use categories: natural, historical, or recreational. The result was that in "recreation" parks, protection of natural resources sometimes came after the interests of park users. In 1970 and 1978, Congress made it very clear in amendments to the National Park Service Organic Act, that NPS should "discontinue [its] practice of managing recreational areas under less protective rules than it was using in managing natural and historic areas."<sup>21</sup> Resource protection was reaffirmed as NPS's

primary job in all parks, including recreation areas. Congress also said that individual parks could approve particular uses that agreed with their specific enabling legislation. Congressman Anthony C. Beilenson, author of the enabling legislation for SMMNRA, wrote to Art Eck, Superintendent of SMMNRA, on December 30, 1996: “As the author of the legislation for SMMNRA, I would like to explain the intent of the original legislation with regard to bicycle usage in the [SMMNRA] Recreation Area and to urge park agencies to limit such usage within the park’s trail system.” “Bicycle usage at the time the SMMNRA was established in 1978 was very different than it is today.” (Mountain bicycles were invented in 1982 and first mass produced in 1985 .) “Bicycles were designed for street travel and, as a result, I never envisioned that park visitors would want to ride their bicycles on dirt mountain trails. Had I foreseen this prospect, I would clearly spelled out in the authorizing legislation that bicycling would only be allowed in areas where that activity would not conflict with other types of park uses. I did not intend that bicycles should be used on hiking and equestrian trails, nor on the narrow, single-track trails that were designed and designated only for hiking.”

Resource protection is such an important NPS job that to open unpaved trails or other undeveloped areas to bicycle use in national parks, the Secretary (of the Interior) has to ... promulgate as a special regulation, the trail designation plan and reach “a written determination that such use is consistent with the protection of a park area’s natural, scenic and aesthetic values, safety considerations and management objectives and will not disturb wildlife or park resources.”<sup>22</sup> “Such a process will provide for a thorough review of all environmental and visitor use considerations and assure the superintendent of having had the benefit of public input and comment before making a decision on any proposed designation.”<sup>23</sup> Of concern in opening trails to bicycle use are public safety, resource protection (including solitude) and avoidance of user conflicts.

We compared trail runners’ observations about the result of bicycle use on single track trails in SMMNRA to the findings of the United States Court of Appeals, Ninth Circuit, in 1996, about bicycle use on single track trails in GGNRA.

In *Bicycle Trails Council of Marin v. Babbitt*, the Court found NPS had ample evidence upon which to find that bicycle use contributed to resource damage in the form of erosion, trampled vegetation and damaged habitat. “Two resource protection concerns were addressed by park officials as supporting restricted bicycle use. First, park officials noted serious erosion problems on certain steep narrow trails and determined that restricting bicycle use would slow such erosion. Second, park officials noted that on narrow trails bicyclists passing other users would either leave the trail or force the other user off the trail to the detriment of off-trail vegetation and wildlife.”<sup>24</sup>

The findings by NPS are consistent with our experiences in SMMNRA. An example of erosion caused by bicycle use on a steep, narrow trail, can readily be seen on Will Rogers segment of the Backbone Trail. This portion was opened to bicycle use in January, 1996, for a “trial period” without documentation, public hearings or baseline environmental assessment of any kind.<sup>25</sup> This trail provides a warning about the damage our excesses can do to natural resources. Bicycle tires, even those under responsible bike riders, have caused wildlife the pain of lost habitat. In many spots, this once beautiful, little trail has become a wide, eroded road, “constructed” by the relentless pounding and grinding of bicycle tires.

The Court found that NPS had ample evidence upon which to find that bicycle use contributed to user conflict and compromised visitor safety. “The record includes hundreds of letters from park users recounting stories of collisions or near misses with speeding or reckless bicyclists on all kinds of trails but particularly on steep

### Results of Bicycle Use on Single Track Trails in SMMNRA and GGNRA

Bicycle use causes:	Trail runners’ observations (SMMNRA):	District court finds (GGNRA):	District court upholds NPS action
Soil Erosion	Yes	Yes	Restrict bicycle use*
Damage to Vegetation	Yes	Yes	Restrict bicycle use*
User Conflict	Yes	Yes	Restrict bicycle use*
Decreased Visitor Safety	Yes	Yes	Restrict bicycle use*

\*With one exception...no single track trails were found suitable for bicycle use in GGNRA



## Attachment E (cont.)

and narrow trails. Hikers and bird watchers have repeatedly told how they have been forced off of trails by speeding bicycles that—because they are quiet and Fast—seemed to appear out of nowhere and be immediately upon the hikers and other users. Equestrians told how their horses have been startled by speeding or oncoming bicycles and have become restless, on several occasions even throwing and injuring experienced riders. Though most users admitted that the great majority of bicyclists were polite and safety conscious, letters from hikers, equestrians, bird watchers, joggers and other users also repeatedly recounted incidents of rudeness, threats, and altercations when they have complained to an offending bicyclist about dangerous conduct.”<sup>26</sup> Sadly, this has been our experience in the Santa Monica Mountains.

The bicycle interests argued in *Bicycle Trails Council of Marin v. Babbitt* that “...only by counting accident reports or other objectively verifiable indicators of conflict and risk can NPS arrive at a reasonable conclusion that user conflict and danger exist.” And “...by relying on subjective individual reports of user conflict, NPS allowed its decision making process to be manipulated by non-bicyclists pursuing a political (not a safety-based) agenda against bicycles.”<sup>25</sup> The Court rejected this argument and wrote: “Individual comment is a very persuasive indicator of ‘user conflict’ for determining the existence of conflicts between humans cannot be numerically calculated or counted; rather the existence of conflict must be evaluated. The court can envision no better way to determine the existence of actual past or likely future conflict between two user groups than to hear from members of these groups.”<sup>28</sup> And, “Notwithstanding the responsible user, bicycles are often perceived by other users as a disruptive influence on park trails. Although most of the few reported bicycle accidents in the park involve only single individuals, letter and reports from hikers and equestrians tell of many close calls and confrontational and unsettling experiences. The amount of bicycle free trails ... seems modest and reasonable response to these concerns.”<sup>29</sup>

Bicycle interests often argue that the parks must open trails to bicycle use because cyclists represent a large proportion of park users. Not so said the court: “The GGNRA Act does not require that recreational opportunities be provided in complete derogation of any other interests.” “Rather, the Act specifically provides the recreational opportunities be provided “consistent with sound principles of land use planning and management ... and ... the Secretary shall preserve the recreation area ... in its natural setting, and protect it from

development and uses which destroy the scenic beauty and natural character of the area.”<sup>27</sup> Resource protection, public safety and avoidance of user conflict are the primary responsibility of NPS land managers.

The Court spoke to many other arguments that the bicycle interests and found that the bicycle interests’ arguments were; “without merit,” “no basis,” “the challenge fails,” “Plaintiffs (bicycle interests) argument fails for at least three reasons,” “Plaintiffs arguments... boarder on sheer speculation,” “not convincing,” “unavailing,” and so forth<sup>30</sup> We find threatened and damaged resources, user conflict and unsafe conditions in the Santa Monica Mountains due to bicycle use on trails. Surprisingly, representatives of bicycle interests still continue to make the same old, unavailing arguments in favor of bicycle use on trails even though the Court has already found the arguments to be totally without merit.

### Abbreviated Options Review<sup>31</sup>

*Whole Access Trail in every park.* Yes. Keep bikes off these trails; too dangerous.

*Better enforcement/staffing.* Yes, there is, practically speaking, little enforcement now.

*No bikes on single track trails.* Yes. Safe, enforceable, resource protective.

*Improve signage.* Yes, signs restricting bike use of trails often removed or defaced.

*Change remove/yield signs.* No. Enforce common usage of word “yield”.

*Close all trails to machines/bikes.* No, just close all single track trails and certain other roads.

*Bikes on Backbone Trail.* No, bike usage displaces other users

*Horse/hiker/desensitization.* No, absurd idea.

*Native American input.* Yes, on all issues; there is little or none now.

### Preferred solution

NPS has a clear mandate from Congress to conserve “...resources while providing for their enjoyment by today’s citizens in a manner that will leave them unimpaired for future generations.” NPS has regulatory and policy making machinery to consider issues of importance to the parks and park users. NPS has expressed a desire to work with surrounding landowners and managers to help ensure that actions outside the parks do not impair park resources and values. NPS has expressed a desire to work with surrounding landowners and managers to help ensure that actions outside the parks do not impair park resources and values. NPS has

tested the adequacy of its administrative processes in court. While NPS procedures are not perfect in execution, they at least provide an acceptable standard of operation for the diverse political bodies in the SMMNRA. We suggest that each trail in the Santa Monica Mountains be assessed for at least environmental impact, user compatibility, public safety and impact on Native American peoples before any single track trails are opened in the Santa Monica Mountains for any recreation machine use, include mountain bicycles.

